

Faith goes cellular

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Abstract:

Real estate agent Faith Echols decided to buy a cellular phone so she could better communicate with customers. Once Echols decided to buy, she faced three major decisions: which carrier to use, which model would suit her needs and from whom to buy the phone and service.

Full Text:

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Faith Echols no longer considers herself a tenderfoot when it comes to cellular phones, but she was not always so wise.

The ability to communicate plays a major role in her success as a real estate agent. "My cellular phone has helped me achieve and maintain my membership in the Million Dollar Club," she says. Echols began her career more than seven years ago as a licensed real estate agent for her father's agency. Today she works for Long and Foster, the biggest agency in the Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., area.

When she decided to purchase her first cellular phone, a bewildering array of choices confronted her. "I spent more than two months in intense deliberation," she admits. "I visited a dozen stores and agents, read magazine articles, studied the product literature, and compared the equipment and service as best I could Echols soon discovered that she had three major choices to make: which cellular carrier she should use (the phone company that provides the cellular service); which specific model of cellular phone would best suit her needs; and from which dealer or agent she should purchase the phone and service. To her, the decisions were equally important.

CHOOSING A CARRIER "When I looked at the newspaper ads and the yellow pages, I discovered several places where I could buy the phone, but I quickly learned I had only two carrier choices," she explains. In most areas one of these carriers operates under the name Cellular One. the other under MobiLink. But company names and affiliations vary from market to market. In Echols's area those carriers are Cellular One and Bell Atlantic Mobile Systems (BAM). In San Francisco the two carriers are Cellular One and GTE Mobilnet (the MobiLink carrier). In Chicago they are Cellular One-Chicago and Ameritech Cellular Services (the MobiLink carrier).

Echols chose Cellular One, basing her decision on the most common criteria for selecting a carrier.

Coverage area. Under the plan she chose, "Cellular One had a greater local calling area [more than 13,000 square miles] than BAM [just under 12,000 square miles]," Echols explains. Local calling area refers to the size of the region in which you can make a local call without paying a long-distance charge, also known as a roaming fee (more on this to follow). Because Echols covers such a large territory in her real estate work, she felt that Cellular One's larger local calling area would save her quite a bit. Far more important, though, was that the places where Echols traveled were included in Cellular One's coverage.

Monthly access fee or airtime charges. The Cellular One monthly service charge for Echols is \$24 plus 39 cents per minute prime time (7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday to Friday) and 19 cents per minute off peak. BAM charges just \$1 more for monthly access and the same per-minute charges for a slightly smaller local calling area. Although the difference in charges was slight, Echols felt it would add up over time. Both carriers also add a small fee for each local call made to a landline (regular wired) phone, but this is minimal--10 cents per call.

Roaming fees. These vary considerably from carrier to carrier and market to market, and they may include both a daily charge (\$2 to \$3) plus a per-minute usage charge (50 cents to \$1 or more). When Echols signed up, the difference in cost for cities she visited frequently was 50 cents per minute with Cellular One versus 99 cents per minute with BAM. "We go to Philadelphia and Atlantic City quite often for both business and pleasure," she says, and she uses her phone frequently when in those cities.

With today's cellular systems, roaming is simple. When you travel to a city away from your local area, you just pick up your phone and dial. The roaming charges appear automatically on your next cellular bill. Receiving calls is almost as easy. Most of the major markets today offer automatic roaming; when someone dials your cellular number, the call is forwarded automatically to you in the city you are visiting.

FINDING A PHONE Echols's next decision was choosing a cellular phone. But each of the more than two dozen manufacturers—including AT&T, Nokia, and OKI—offers several different models, with varying features and at a wide range of prices—from \$50 to \$800.

"I decided to stick with the tried-and-true cellular manufacturer, Motorola, one of the oldest in the business," she explains. "Motorola phones are supposed to be quite durable. You can basically drop one four feet onto concrete without hurting it." Because Echols is a realtor and spends a lot of time at commercial and construction sites, building lots, and farms, durability was high on her list.

Next came the decision on type of phone (see "Selecting Your Phone"). If Echols were getting one for security or peace of mind, a lower-priced unit (\$50 or so) would have filled the bill. "But for business, you need to go for the more advanced model with all the features," she says, "such as the data link that connects the phone to your laptop computer."

Her decision was easy. Because she spends a lot of time working from her car, she settled on a portable: one of Motorola's popular flip phones, the MicroTAC Ultra Lite, which weighs less than a half pound and slips easily into her pocket or purse. She paid \$750. "It certainly wasn't the cheapest one available," Echols says, but she especially likes the phone's VibraCall option. "If I'm in an important meeting, I set the phone on the vibrator ring. When I get a call, it vibrates silently and does not disturb the meeting."

She also selected a vehicle adapter kit, which added another \$150 to the price of her phone. When she gets into the car, she slides the phone into the special cradle so that it works like a standard car phone. A hands-free adapter kit lets her keep both hands on the wheel while talking on the phone. "It's a safety feature, and it's more convenient," she says.

THE DEALER DECISION Her final choice was to select her cellular dealer, or who would sell her the phone and activate the service. Because she had already selected Cellular One, she sought a dealer who was a Cellular One agent. "I didn't like how pushy so many of the dealers were," she exclaims.

Echols decided on Mid-Atlantic Cellular, a local Cellular One dealer near her real estate office. She found them courteous, knowledgeable, and professional. "They don't try to hard sell you," she says. MidAtlantic Cellular was also willing to match any deal offered by any other cellular company in town, she notes. But price was a less-important factor in her decision. She was impressed that their service included delivery and a free loaner phone if something went wrong with her phone unit.

Has Echols picked up any other tips that she would like to share with first-time buyers?

"Don't be fooled by advertisements for free or almost free cellular phones," she says. "Be sure you understand what else is required on your part." Frequently, you need to sign a service agreement for a certain period of time, perhaps a year or so, and you could get hit with a large penalty if you disconnect early. "Also look for hidden charges. Sometimes the free phone requires you to pay a programming or processing fee, special charges, activation fees, and so on," Echols says.

"You usually get what you pay for," she concludes, "but with cellular, you get more than what you pay for. Cellular gives you something that money can't buy--extra time. A cellular phone lets me turn

downtime into selling time."

SELECTING YOUR PHONE

Cellular phones come in four basic models: mobile (mounted in the car), transmobile (a mobile phone not permanently mounted in the car; it draws its power by plugging into the cigarette lighter), transportable (similar to transmobile, except that it has a separate battery pack and thus can be used outside a car), and portable (a one-piece, self-contained unit that fits in the palm of the hand).

Which one is best for you depends on how and where you intend to use your phone. If you're getting the phone just for emergency use, the less-expensive (under \$100) transmobile may fit your needs.

If you spend most of the day in your car on business, the mobile (\$50 to \$300) will always be available at your fingertips.

If you spend time traveling between cities or from office to office, the handheld portable (\$50 to \$800) may be your best choice.

The heavier transportable (\$50 to \$300) is good for locations such as construction sites where you need its longer-life, heavy-duty battery.

Most cellular phones on the market are analog. In a few cities digital cellular is now coming online. Digital promises a clearer signal and somewhat improved privacy, but it is also quite expensive (\$200 to \$500 more). Cellular carriers have promised to provide service for both types of phones for the next decade, at least. So you needn't feel pressured to switch to digital just yet.

Here is a list of features that you might want to look for in your phone.

Hands-free speakerphone. If you plan to frequently use your phone while driving, this feature is safer and more convenient than holding the handset to your ear and is available with most mobiles. If you already have a portable phone, you can purchase a hands-free adapter.

Alphanumeric memory. Store up to 100 (or more) phone numbers in memory for easy access by name.

Any-button answer. You can touch any button to answer the phone--much better than searching frantically for a small button while driving.

Hot buttons. Like speed dialing, you can dial up to three frequently called numbers at the touch of a single button.

Car adapter. If you buy a portable, get a car adapter with a three-watt booster for use in the car.

Voice-activated dialing. Dial the phone by the sound of your voice (a good safety feature when driving).

Built-in pager. Your phone acts as a pager, flashing each caller's number. You then decide if the call is important enough to return on expensive cellular time.

Dual- or multi-NAM. The phone can be linked to two or more carriers, each with a different phone number. For example, if you live in Baltimore and travel frequently to New York, you could obtain a second, New York number for your phone. When visiting New York, you'll pay only local New York rates, rather than the higher roaming fee.

Computer and fax compatibility. You can plug a cellular fax/modem into the phone and transmit data wirelessly.

Special services. Like features on your home phone, these include call waiting, no-answer forwarding, three-way calling, no-answer transfer, and voice mail. They range from free to a few dollars per month.

A frequent speaker and consultant, STUART F. CRUMP JR. is the editor and publisher of the Cellular Sales & Marketing newsletter, author of Cellular Telephones: A Layman's Guide (Tab Books), and the upcoming book Cellular Office Magic (Creative Books).

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R. W. S. Dialog Scanned for 09/533, 087

Set	Items	Description
S1	147	(BEST()BUY OR CIRCUIT()CITY) AND ((REBAT? OR DISCOUNT?)(3N-)COMPUTER? ?) AND (PRODIGY OR MSN) AND (INTERNET) AND PY<=1999
S2	100	RD (unique items)
S3	1	S2 AND ((IN-STORE OR INSTORE OR POS OR POINT(2N)SALE) (4N) (- REGIST? OR SIGN?()UP OR ACCOUNT?))
S4	7	S2 AND (POS OR POINT(2N)SALE OR CASH()REGISTER?)
S5	6	S4 NOT S3
S6	11	S2 AND PD<990714
S7	7	S1 AND (BEST()BUY()MAKES()PC)
File	9:Business & Industry(R)	Jul/1994-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Resp. DB Svcs.
File	15:ABI/Inform(R)	1971-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File	16:Gale Group PROMT(R)	1990-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	20:Dialog Global Reporter	1997-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Dialog Corp.
File	148:Gale Group Trade & Industry DB	1976-2004/Mar 02 (c)2004 The Gale Group
File	258:AP News Jul	2000-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Associated Press
File	261:UPI News	1999-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 United Press International
File	275:Gale Group Computer DB(TM)	1983-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	387:The Denver Post	1994-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Denver Post
File	392:Boston Herald	1995-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Boston Herald
File	397:Las Vegas Review-Journal	1997-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 Las Vegas R-J
File	427:Fort Worth Star-Telegram	1993-2004/Feb 23 (c) 2004 Fort Worth Papers
File	433:Charleston Newspapers	1997-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Charleston Newspapers
File	492:Arizona Repub/Phoenix Gaz.	19862002/Jan 06 (c) 2002 Phoenix Newspapers
File	545:Investext(R)	1982-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 Thomson Financial Networks
File	553:Wilson Bus. Abs. FullText	1982-2004/Jan (c) 2004 The HW Wilson Co
File	570:Gale Group MARS(R)	1984-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	577:Roanoke Times	1992-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Roanoke Times
File	582:Augusta Chronicle	1996- 2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Augusta Chronicle
File	608:KR/T Bus.News.	1992-2004/Mar 02 (c)2004 Knight Ridder/Tribune Bus News
File	610:Business Wire	1999-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Business Wire.
File	613:PR Newswire	1999-2004/Feb 29 (c) 2004 PR Newswire Association Inc
File	621:Gale Group New Prod.Annou.(R)	1985-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	623:Business Week	1985-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 The McGraw-Hill Companies Inc
File	624:McGraw-Hill Publications	1985-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 McGraw-Hill Co. Inc
File	631:Boston Globe	1980-2004/Feb 29 (c) 2004 Boston Globe
File	633:Phil.Inquirer	1983-2004/Feb 29 (c) 2004 Philadelphia Newspapers Inc
File	635:Business Dateline(R)	1985-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File	636:Gale Group Newsletter DB(TM)	1987-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	638:Newsday/New York Newsday	1987-2004/Mar 01

(c) 2004 Newsday I
File 643:Grand Forks Herald 1995-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 Grand Forks Herald
File 645:Contra Costa Papers 1995- 2004/Feb 28
(c) 2004 Contra Costa Newspapers
File 647:CMP Computer Fulltext 1988-2004/Feb W4
(c) 2004 CMP Media, LLC
File 649:Gale Group Newswire ASAP(TM) 2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 The Gale Group
File 674:Computer News Fulltext 1989-2004/Feb W4
(c) 2004 IDG Communications
File 701:St Paul Pioneer Pr Apr 1988-2004/Feb 25
(c) 2004 St Paul Pioneer Press
File 702:Miami Herald 1983-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 The Miami Herald Publishing Co.
File 703:USA Today 1989-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 USA Today
File 704:(Portland)The Oregonian 1989-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 The Oregonian
File 706:(New Orleans)Times Picayune 1989-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 Times Picayune
File 707:The Seattle Times 1989-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Seattle Times
File 709:Richmond Times-Disp. 1989-2004/Feb 28
(c) 2004 Richmond Newspapers Inc
File 713:Atlanta J/Const. 1989-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Atlanta Newspapers
File 716:Daily News Of L.A. 1989-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Daily News of Los Angeles
File 719:(Albany) The Times Union Mar 1986-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 Times Union
File 721:Lexington Hrlld.-Ldr. 1990-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Lexington Herald-Leader
File 722:Cincinnati/Kentucky Post 1990-2004/Feb 27
(c) 2004 The Cincinnati Post
File 723:The Wichita Eagle 1990-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 The Wichita Eagle
File 732:San Francisco Exam. 1990- 2000/Nov 21
(c) 2000 San Francisco Examiner
File 733:The Buffalo News 1990- 2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Buffalo News
File 739:The Fresno Bee 1990-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 The Fresno Bee
File 740:(Memphis)Comm.Appeal 1990-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 The Commercial Appeal
File 741:(Norfolk)Led./Pil. 1990-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Virg.-Pilot/Led.-Star
File 768:EIU Market Research 2004/Feb 26
(c) 2004 EIU
File 781:ProQuest Newsstand 1998-2004/Mar 02
(c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File 810:Business Wire 1986-1999/Feb 28
(c) 1999 Business Wire
File 979:Milwaukee Jnl Sentinel Apr 1998-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 Milwaukee Jnl Sntl

File 732:San Francisco Exam. 1990-2000/Nov 21
(c) 2000 San Francisco Examiner
File 733:The Buffalo News 1990-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Buffalo News
File 739:The Fresno Bee 1990-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 The Fresno Bee
File 740:(Memphis)Comm.Appeal 1990-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 The Commercial Appeal
File 741:(Norfolk)Led./Pil. 1990-2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Virg.-Pilot/Led.-Star
File 768:EIU Market Research 2004/Feb 26
(c) 2004 EIU
File 781:ProQuest Newsstand 1998-2004/Mar 02
(c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File 810:Business Wire 1986-1999/Feb 28
(c) 1999 Business Wire
File 979:Milwaukee Jnl Sentinel Apr 1998-2004/Mar 01
(c) 2004 Milwaukee Jnl Sntl

Set	Items	Description
S1	141	((REBATE? OR FREE OR DISCOUNT?) (3N) (TELEPHONE? OR PHONE? OR CELLULAR)) AND CONTRACT? ? AND (VERIF? (3N) (SERVICE? ? OR AGREEMENT? ?)) AND PY<=1999
S2	100	RD (unique items)
S3	32	S2 AND PD<990714
File	13:	BAMP 2004/Feb W4 (c) 2004 Resp. DB Svcs.
File	15:	ABI/Inform(R) 1971-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File	16:	Gale Group PROMT(R) 1990-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	20:	Dialog Global Reporter 1997-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Dialog Corp.
File	47:	Gale Group Magazine DB(TM) 1959-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale group
File	75:	TGG Management Contents(R) 86-2004/Feb W4 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	88:	Gale Group Business A.R.T.S. 1976-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	141:	Readers Guide 1983-2004/Jan (c) 2004 The HW Wilson Co
File	148:	Gale Group Trade & Industry DB 1976-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	149:	TGG Health&Wellness DB(SM) 1976-2004/Feb W4 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	180:	Federal Register 1985-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 format only The DIALOG Corp
File	275:	Gale Group Computer DB(TM) 1983-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	348:	EUROPEAN PATENTS 1978-2004/Feb W04 (c) 2004 European Patent Office
File	349:	PCT FULLTEXT 1979-2002/UB=20040226, UT=20040219 (c) 2004 WIPO/Univentio
File	484:	Periodical Abs Plustext 1986-2004/Feb W4 (c) 2004 ProQuest
File	542:	SEC-Online(TM) 10-K Reports 1997/Sep W3 (c) 1987-1997 SEC Online Inc.
File	545:	Investext(R) 1982-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 Thomson Financial Networks
File	553:	Wilson Bus. Abs. FullText 1982-2004/Jan (c) 2004 The HW Wilson Co
File	570:	Gale Group MARS(R) 1984-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	608:	KR/T Bus.News. 1992-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 Knight Ridder/Tribune Bus News
File	610:	Business Wire 1999-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Business Wire.
File	613:	PR Newswire 1999-2004/Feb 29 (c) 2004 PR Newswire Association Inc
File	621:	Gale Group New Prod. Annou.(R) 1985-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	624:	McGraw-Hill Publications 1985-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 McGraw-Hill Co. Inc
File	635:	Business Dateline(R) 1985-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File	636:	Gale Group Newsletter DB(TM) 1987-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	649:	Gale Group Newswire ASAP(TM) 2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	654:	US Pat.Full. 1976-2004/Feb 26 (c) Format only 2004 The Dialog Corp.
File	660:	Federal News Service 1991-2002/Jul 02 (c) 2002 Federal News Service
File	696:	DIALOG Telecom. Newsletters 1995-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 The Dialog Corp.
File	713:	Atlanta J/Const. 1989-2004/Feb 29 (c) 2004 Atlanta Newspapers
File	732:	San Francisco Exam. 1990- 2000/Nov 21

(c) 2000 San Francisco Examiner
File 733: The Buffalo News 1990- 2004/Feb 29
(c) 2004 Buffalo News
File 774: EdgarPlus(TM) - Prospectuses 2004/Mar 02
(c) 2004 Disclosure Inc
File 810: Business Wire 1986-1999/Feb 28
(c) 1999 Business Wire

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Set	Items	Description
S1	17	(RADIO()SHACK OR BEST()BUY OR CIRCUIT()CITY) AND ((FREE OR DISCOUNT?) (3N) (CELL OR CELLULAR) () (PHONE? ? OR TELEPHONE? ?)) AND (SERVICE()CONTRACT? ?) AND PY<=1999
S2	15	RD (unique items)
File	15:	ABI/Inform(R) 1971-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning
File	16:	Gale Group PROMT(R) 1990-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	148:	Gale Group Trade & Industry DB 1976-2004/Mar 02 (c)2004 The Gale Group
File	387:	The Denver Post 1994-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 Denver Post
File	542:	SEC Online(TM) 10-K Reports 1997/Sep W3 (c) 1987-1997 SEC Online Inc.
File	545:	Investext(R) 1982-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 Thomson Financial Networks
File	553:	Wilson Bus. Abs. FullText 1982-2004/Jan (c) 2004 The HW Wilson Co
File	570:	Gale Group MARS(R) 1984-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 The Gale Group
File	634:	San Jose Mercury Jun 1985-2004/Mar 01 (c) 2004 San Jose Mercury News
File	640:	San Francisco Chronicle 1988-2004/Mar 02 (c) 2004 Chronicle Publ. Co.
File	646:	Consumer Reports 1982-2004/Feb (c) 2004 Consumer Union
File	716:	Daily News Of L.A. 1989-2004/Feb 29 (c) 2004 Daily News of Los Angeles
File	724:	(Minneapolis)Star Tribune 1989-1996/Feb 04 (c) 1996 Star Tribune
File	732:	San Francisco Exam. 1990- 2000/Nov 21 (c) 2000 San Francisco Examiner

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Your SELECT statement is:

s (prodigy()internet()complete) and (instant()savings) and py<=1999

Items	File
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Examined 50	files
Examined 100	files
Examined 150	files
Examined 200	files
Examined 250	files
Examined 300	files
Examined 350	files
Examined 400	files
Examined 450	files
Examined 500	files
Examined 550	files

No files have one or more items; file list includes 555 files.
One or more terms were invalid in 102 files.

2/9/14 (Item 1 from file: 724)
DIALOG(R) File 724: (Minneapolis) Star Tribune
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08029104

CELL PHONE HYPE PIGEON FAMILY SWEATS THE DETAILS

STAR TRIBUNE (MS) - Sunday, January 29, 1995

By: Mr. Pigeon, Staff Writer

Edition: Metro Edition Section: MARKETPLACE Page: 01D

Word Count: 1,971

MEMO:

The final version of this article was not available electronically. Refer to the Star Tribune microfilm for the final, published version.

TEXT:

It was Christmas, and Mrs. Pigeon thought a cellular phone would make a nice gift for her husband. And they were cheap. Less than \$30 at the superstores. So she went shopping.

She returned home frustrated and without a phone. After Christmas, she explained to Mr. Pigeon that she had wanted to buy him one of those phones so he could call home when he was late or if the car was broken or if he cracked his ribs playing basketball. But she didn't, she said, because those inexpensive cellular phones simply cost too much. What Mrs. Pigeon found out while shopping, and what Mr. Pigeon discovered by reading the fine print and talking to cellular phone officials, was an enlightening lesson: When you buy a cellular phone, you're buying much more than an electronic gadget. You're buying a year of service -- at varying monthly prices and with penalties for changing your mind.

Simply put, if you want to go cellular, you'd better do your homework.

Make a deal

Mrs. Pigeon thought she knew something about cellular phones. After all, she manages her boss' cellular account at work. She also knows how to cut deals. After all, she works in commercial real estate.

So it was natural for her to think she could do some smart cellular phone shopping and maybe cut a deal or two.

She was wrong.

What Mrs. Pigeon wanted to do was simple: Buy a cheap cellular phone for Mr. Pigeon and add the account to her existing corporate account with Cellular One. After all, her boss already paid for at least 500 minutes of phone time a month.

She hoped to pay for the phone, pay for the additional minutes but avoid the extra activation fee. It only sounded simple.

First, she went to Circuit City.

Great prices on phones. A couple cost less than \$50; one cost less than \$30. But even though Circuit City sells phones to go on Cellular One service, its salespeople wouldn't do the deal. Why not?

Dee Austin, a spokeswoman for Cellular One, said corporate accounts and retail accounts are handled differently and the two don't meet. Corporate accounts are handled by in-house salespeople; Circuit City sets up the accounts for its customers.

Of course, it might also have something to do with that one-time \$40 activation fee for new customers. Fine print note: all of the discounted phone prices apply to new customers who buy the service.

If you simply want to replace an old phone, you can't get that price. Mrs. Pigeon asked the salesperson if she could just buy the phone and

not the service. Nope. Unless she wanted to add \$300 to the price of the phone. See, many of the retailers discount the price of some phones to attract customers. They use commissions from the cellular phone companies to keep prices down for the actual phones; but if you don't buy the service, they can't discount the phone price.

"It's really a \$349 phone," the salesman told Mrs. Pigeon.

"No," she said, a bit irritated. "You advertise it as a \$49 phone."

So Mrs. Pigeon went to Target, but found she couldn't do the deal there either. Different problem, though. Target sells service for U S West Cellular. U S West Cellular and Cellular One are the only two cellular service providers for the Twin Cities -- and are fierce competitors -- although a number of resellers buy time from them in blocks and resell it at lower prices.

And Target wouldn't even sell her a phone -- even at a higher price -- unless she signed the **service contract**.

"So," Mrs. Pigeon sighed, finishing her tale, "I didn't get you a phone."

The fine print

Officials with U S West Cellular and Cellular One said all these caveats are clear in their contracts and in the fine print in cellular phone ads. But the Pigeons, like many other consumers, don't always read the fine print first.

Consider this an attempt at making the fine print large.

Rule No. 1: There really is no such thing as a \$39 cellular phone. It may cost \$39 to buy the phone, but only if you buy a year's **service contract** and pay a \$40 activation fee. So expect to spend \$79 for that phone right off the bat and from \$29.99 to \$285 a month for calling plans.

And per-month costs could go much higher if you use your phone for more time than provided by the plan. Costs could be greater still if you choose to buy options such as voice mail, roadside assistance, phone insurance and other features.

"It's not like going out and buying a radio or a TV and you change your mind," said Austin of Cellular One. "Customers are buying the service. It's very clear in the contract. They should do their homework up front."

Cautioned Don Schena, general manager for Minnesota for U S West Cellular: "It's not a stand alone, go in and buy a box for \$39. There is a service included. You can't buy one without the other."

Both U S West and Cellular One charge penalties if you cut service before your year is up -- \$200 for Cellular One and \$300 (reduced by \$25 a month for each month you had service) for U S West Cellular. Once your contract is up, you're free to shop for the best rate.

In addition, the store may charge you for the actual cost of the phone if you cancel early. That could cost another \$250 to \$300.

Rule No. 2: No matter who's doing the selling or reselling of cellular phone time, there are only two choices for service -- Cellular One or U S West Cellular. All the other folks out there are either retail agents for them, affiliated with them, or they've bought blocks of their time at a discount and are reselling it.

Rule No. 3: Long distance costs are not included in any of this stuff.

Rule No. 4: This probably will cost you more than your regular telephone service. Officials with both companies tout cellular phones for their convenience and mobility. But you pay for it. Few people, if any, will find cellular phone use a bargain, compared with their standard

phones.

A salesman at **Circuit City** in Roseville said he owns two cellular phones -- one for home and one for work. And it costs him \$19.95 a month with 150 free minutes.

But then he sells a lot of phones for Cellular One, he said.

Rule No. 5: Before buying a cellular phone -- read the four previous rules all over again.

Open the newspapers and you'll see the ads for unbelievably inexpensive **discounted cellular phones**: \$29.99 -- \$39.99 -- \$49.99. But while phone prices range from less than \$30 to more than \$280, be aware: When you buy a cellular phone, you buy more than just an electronic gadget. You buy up to a year's worth of service -- for varying prices per month. And if you decide you want out, it could cost you a lot.

Here's some of the fine print, enlarged, for the two cellular phone companies that serve the Twin Cities area:

US West Cellular

Main Retailers:

Audio King

Target

Sears

Radio Shack

Note: You can't buy the phone unless you buy the **service**.

Contract length:

Buyer commits to one year of service. One-time setup charge of \$40.
What if you want out?:

Unless you move out of the calling area, it will cost \$300 to break your contract. US West Cellular officials say that covers the true cost of the phone. That amount is cut by \$25 for each month you had the service during the contract period.

Basic calling plans:

All include call waiting, call forwarding, conference calling, retroactive billing, SelectConnect and MobiLink:

- Casual Caller

\$29.95/month

Buys 30 minutes of local calling time, any time. After that, you pay 45 cents/minute for peak calling time, 25 cents/minute for late nights and weekends.

- Standard Caller

\$39.95/month

Buys an hour of local calling time, any time. From 61 to 200 minutes, you pay 36 cents/minute for peak time and 22 cents off-peak. For time over 200 minutes, you pay 35 cents/minute peak and 22 cents off-peak.

- Frequent Caller

\$79.95/month

Buys 200 minutes of local time, any time. 201 to 400 minutes cost 32 cents/minute peak; 401 to 1,000 minutes: 26 cents/minute peak; more than 1,000 minutes: 25 cents/minute. Off-peak for more than 200 minutes: 16 cents/minute.

- Weekend Bonus

\$49.94/month

Buys 60 minutes of local weekday calls and free weekend calling. Additional weekday calling: 36 cents/minute.

Note: For all plans, long distance calling is extra and depends on your carrier.

What if you don't like the plan you're on?:

US West will switch you to a plan with more or fewer minutes at no additional cost. You pay only the increased or decreased cost of the plan.

Additional options, monthly costs:

Mr. Rescue: Roadside assistance service for car troubles -- \$2.95

Digital Messaging: Three ways for folks to reach you -- \$9.95

Message Center: Personal voice messaging -- \$6.95

Message Center Alert: Adds pager to voice messaging -- \$12.95

Insurance: \$2.95 for mobile phone insurance; \$3.95 for portable phone insurance.

Cellular One

Main Retailers:

Best Buy Superstores

Circuit City

Additional options, monthly costs:

Toll restriction: \$10

Toll restriction: \$10

Contract length:

Buyer commits to one year of service. One-time \$40 setup charge.

What if you want out?:

Unless you move to another Cellular One market and continue service there, you pay a \$200 "contract obligation" fee to discontinue service before your contract expires. Note: Best Buy and Circuit City often use commission payments from Cellular One to discount the cost of their phones. If you cancel your contract early, you may also have to pay the store \$300 to cover the cost of the cellular phone.

Basic calling plans:

All include call waiting and conference calling; basic plan does not include call forwarding.

- Basic plan

\$39.99/month

Buys 60 minutes/month of local calling time, any time. For more than 60 minutes, you pay 42 cents/minute during peak time and 20 cents/minute.

- Time Manager 180

\$72/month

Buys 180 minutes of local calling time, any time. For 181 to 400 minutes,

you pay 40 cents/minute for peak calls, 16 cents off-peak. For more than 400 minutes, you pay 35 cents/minute peak and 16 cents off-peak.

- Time Manager 270

\$99/month

Buys you 270 minutes of local calling, any time. For 271 to 400 minutes, you pay 38 cents/minute for peak time. For more than 400 minutes, you pay 30 cents/minute for peak time. Off-peak for any time over 270 minutes is 16 cents/minute.

- Time Manager 500

\$150/month

Buys 500 minutes of local calling, any time. For 501 to 620 minutes, you pay 30 cents/minute for peak time; 16 cents/minute off-peak. For more than 620 minutes, you pay 28 cents/minute for peak time and 16 cents for off-peak.

- Time Manager 1100

\$285/month

Pays for 1,100 minutes of local calling, any time. For more than that, you pay 28 cents/minute for peak time and 17 cents/minute off-peak.

Note: For all plans-long distance calling is extra and depends on your carrier.

What if you don't like the plan you're on?:

Cellular One will switch you to a plan with more or fewer minutes at no additional cost. You pay the increased or decreased cost of the plan.

Additional options, monthly costs:

Toll restriction: \$10

Call restriction: \$10

Directory listing: \$2.75

Voice Mail Enhanced: \$16.99

Voice Mail Plus: \$12.99

Phone insurance: \$2.99

Roadside assistance: \$2.99

Automatic pay by credit card: \$2.99

(The final version of this article was not available electronically. Refer to the Star Tribune microfilm for the final, published version.)

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CAPTION:

Illustration

2/9/6 (Item 1 from file: 387)
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00625125 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
Cart vendors offer line-free shopping
Penny Parker, Denver Post Business Writer
Denver Post, WED1 ED, P D-01
Wednesday, December 20, 1995
DOCUMENT TYPE: NEWSPAPER JOURNAL CODE: DP LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT SECTION HEADING: BUSINESS
Word Count: 605

TEXT:
Have you had it with lines by now?

Consider carts. Those cart vendors located at area malls offer crazed Christmas shoppers a fast and easy way to knock off last-minute Christmas gift buying. No lines.

On the Go Gifts in The Shops at Tabor Center even takes care of creativity by offering a variety of packages including golf lessons, a biplane ride, brunch for two or Comedy Works tickets.

Prices start at \$16 for "Do The Zoo (For 2)" which includes two tickets to the Denver Zoo. The most expensive package costs \$199 for a romantic getaway to the Aspen Lodge in Estes Park. Each gift comes in a Christmas bag filled with items that complement the gift.

On the Go Gifts creator Mark Voss said his enterprise was born "out of necessity."

"I always had difficulty finding gifts for my family and friends," Voss said. "I thought there were probably a lot of people like me who were frustrated finding a gift for people who have everything."

Voss buys tickets at a bulk discount so his retail markup is roughly \$5 to \$10 over the price you'd pay if you sought out tickets yourself. You can order by phone at 893-6696.

Russian Gifts is another unusual cart shop at Tabor. Owner Robert Winningham's inventory includes a large selection of authentic Russian Matrushka - or nesting - dolls. Prices are \$20, \$40 or \$60 depending on the intricacy of the artwork and the number of dolls that nest - from three to 12.

Magic Pens, for children ages 3 and up, is another product only available through cart sales. The pens sell for \$20 for 20 pens. The pens in one box change color and the other box of pens erases. Tony Rose at the cart at Tabor Center provides a complete free demonstration.

Tait Conger, owner of the Colorado Artimage cart at Tabor, says it was his kids' idea to start the cart. "My kids knew I was an artist and they saw shirts from other people and figured I could do that too," says Conger who's had his cart business for five years.

Conger creates all the Indian-inspired designs on the brightly colored cotton-knit T-shirts (\$19.99), cardigans (\$45), sweatshirts (\$34.99) and dresses (\$29.99).

Deals Bulletin. Several promotions out there this season are pushing cell phones to the top of the "hot gifts" list.

Discount Cellular, a distributor of AT&T's Go Phone, sells phones and signs up subscribers from a cart at Tabor Center. The phone costs \$39.99 and the service charge is \$19.99 monthly,

which includes 120 minutes of evening and weekend calling.

King Soopers' cell phone deal offers either an Audiovox 450 phone for \$19.99 or a Motorola DPC 550 Flip Phone for 1 cent. With the purchase a phone, you get a \$75 gift certificate to King Soopers and free weekend and evening calls for three months. The deal requires a \$40 activation fee, and a one-year **service contract** with US West Cellular with monthly packages that range from \$29 to \$114.

At Joslins, if you make a \$25 cosmetic or fragrance purchase you can get a free Motorola flip phone or AT&T 3810 and 30 days of free unlimited calling with a one-year **service contract** from \$30 to \$79 a month and a \$40 activation fee.

Best Buy is waiving the activation fee on all service plans and throwing in 30 days of free local calling, and a free pre-paid AT&T calling card.

Incredible Universe is giving away a breadmaker with each **free cell phone** for customers who sign up for a one-year contract.

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Selling a free phone

Spoor, Dana L

Cellular Business v11n2 PP: 58-62 Feb 1994 ISSN: 0741-6520 JRNL CODE:

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ABSTRACT: Because it costs so little to become a cellular subscriber at the outset, it can be difficult to establish value in the customer's mind. Ways in which the cellular seller can show value are: 1. Make customers aware of the fees associated with using a cellular phone. 2. Find out why customers want a cellular phone and provide literature that touts the benefits of wireless communication. 3. Show the customer what type of service plan comes with the agreement. 4. Consider offering extra services or features to entice customers from the competition.

TEXT: Just about everywhere you turn today, you can see a fast food restaurant. If you have a few dollars and some change in your pocket, you can drive up to the window and order a meal.

Although you can't get a cellular phone by ordering it through a talking hamburger, you can spend about the same amount of change as you did at the golden arches for the phone and activation. Because it costs so little to become a cellular subscriber at the outset, you may be finding it difficult to establish value in your customer's mind.

When you order lunch through your car window, the food is not always of four-star quality. The old adage -- you get what you pay for -- certainly applies. But that is not true in the cellular world. Even though customers may spend pocket change for a new phone, they are purchasing a high-quality product.

Your challenge is to show your customers that cellular is not a drive-through item. Some dealers and retailers are meeting the challenge by taking the time to show the real value of cellular and uncover some of the hidden treasures behind the special deals and promotions. For these dealers, customers are beginning to see the value of wireless communications.

UNCOVERING THE DETAILS

Not every company offers a phone for a dollar or a free phone with a purchase. However, those that do are changing the landscape of cellular selling. Customers are beginning to question why they can get a portable so cheap. They want to know how stores are able virtually to give the phones away.

"It is ~~always easy to take a chance on something free,~~" said John Rooney, president of Ameritech Cellular Services. "Giving somebody a free phone is a real misnomer. There is no such thing as a free cellular phone."

Even though advertisements may claim to offer free phones, they are not really free. Customers pay for the hardware throughout the length of their

service contracts. The deal is just a way of getting customers to start thinking about cellular and to draw them into your store. Your customers may not know that your carrier is subsidizing the cost of the phone. Instead, they see a product that is being sold for next to nothing. Many of those customers think that because the product is so inexpensive, it must be cheap. Your job is to show them that this product is valuable and that it is worth paying money to purchase.

"We will tell the customers that the carriers are supporting that reduction in the hardware price," said Anne Fleagle, senior buyer for Best Buy, Minneapolis. "Most people think if you are giving the product away that there is a catch. And there is. We make them aware of what is involved, and that they are signing a contract, and that they are committed to that contract. At that point, you can help alleviate some of their concerns that they are getting this for nothing. You show them up front that that is not true."

She noted that salespeople should take the time to explain that the customer's first bill could be substantial. Although the customer may not have paid for the phone up front, there may be an activation fee in addition to the airtime charges. By making customers aware of the fees associated with using a cellular phone, you show them that cellular is not a giveaway item. You are putting a value tag on the product and service.

TOOTING YOUR HORN

Some customers will be satisfied at this point. They understand that they are paying for the phone throughout the length of their contract and if they back out at any time there will be a cancellation fee. They understand that you are selling them a product as part of a low-priced package deal. Other customers will not be convinced. You need to spend more time showing these customers how valuable cellular is.

Start by asking questions. Find out if your customer has ever used a cellular phone. Because less than 5% of the population has a cellular phone, you may find that many of your customers have never hit a SEND button. Be prepared for these customers. Have activated phones on display. Let the customer call friend or family member and talk for a few minutes. Let them hear the sound quality and see how easy it is to operate the equipment. After customers realize that cellular phones are easier to operate than their VCRs, they may become less hesitant about making a purchase.

When talking with customers, find out why they want a cellular phone. Use that information to help you sell. If customers want phones for safety reasons, then talk about the memory storage for emergency numbers. If customers need phones to conduct business, discuss battery options for longer talk time. Maybe your customers need to be remain in touch at all times. Show how compact and lightweight today's portables are. By showing them how cellular makes life easier, you are establishing value.

Also, provide literature that touts the benefits of wireless communication. Some customers are leery of salespeople. They know you want to sell them something and they don't know if you will answer all of their questions honestly. Keep printed facts about cellular handy. You can show them that you are not the only one who believes in the benefits of cellular. Also, your customers may not want to make a decision on the spot. They can take literature home to read about the product and service.

Don't forget to talk about the reputation of the phone manufacturer.

Customers want to be sure the hardware is quality and that after the 2-year agreement is complete, the phone won't fall apart in their hands.

"We play off what we can offer," said Kevin Petschow, public relations manager for Sprint Cellular. Sprint only sells Motorola products, and salespeople use that to their advantage. "We really play off the quality of the product."

Take the time to talk about your service. After all, the real reason behind the promotion is to sign up new customers. Sell the customer on the service.

"You have to convince the customer that the phone is really just a means for the service," said Jim Gerace, director of public relations for NYNEX Mobile Communications. "Long after the novelty of the handset wears off, they are still using the service and that is really what they are buying." Show the customer what type of service plan comes with the agreement. Discuss the technological side of being able to offer cellular -- how big your coverage area is, how many cell sites you have to accommodate calls, what technology you are using to guard against dropped calls. Detail the high quality and explain the extra services you offer compared to your competition. Talk about your service department and the skills that are required to work in that department. If your company has a training program for salespeople, discuss it with your customers. They will feel more comfortable knowing that you were required to learn about cellular before beginning to sell it. Talk about how your company handles customers' problems. For example, explain that the carrier offers a 24-hour customer service department so they can call at any time to talk about a problem. Show your customers that by signing up for this special promotion, they will not only receive a quality phone, they also will receive quality service.

"You have to put the overall economics, the cost of the phone in perspective," said Gary Johnson, director of marketing services for Bell Atlantic Mobile (BAM). As a customer, that is really almost insignificant. What is important is the quality of service itself. How reliable is it? Is it going to work when you want to make a call? Show the customer support."

FACING THE COMPETITION

Maybe your company is offering free phones or phones for a dollar. Or maybe you are marketing a phone with a sale price when the customer signs up for a certain service agreement. Then again, maybe you are offering free minutes of airtime when a customer signs up for any service plan. And there are bound to be other deals surfacing daily throughout the marketplace. Whatever your promotion may be, the idea is to draw customers to your store. However, your deal may not sound as sweet as the competitor's, despite the fact that you know it is a more economical offer for the customer's pocketbook.

"That is a tough issue. When a customer comes in and says they can get one for free down the street, we stress the quality of the service," Ameritech's Rooney said.

If your company isn't offering free trials or reduced airtime rates, find other ways to compete. Consider offering extra services or features to entice the customers. For example, give your customers voice mail services or call forwarding at no charge for the first month. This gives the customer a chance to try the service without making a commitment. Hopefully, the customer will realize how beneficial voice mail is and sign

up for it after the free introductory period.

Carriers are offering many different options to draw customers. For example, ALLTEL Mobile offers a set amount of free minutes a month with one of the rate packages. NYNEX gives customers a certain amount of free airtime during the sixth month of their contract. For longer contracts, customers may receive more free airtime during the 13th or 26th month. Best Buy promotes free minutes of air time as well. In the Chicago market. Ameritech offers a 30-day free trial, in which customers use a cellular phone for one month and only pay for the airtime.

"We want them to see for themselves that we offer the best quality and are less expensive than our competitor," said Maribeth Johnson, director of public relations for Ameritech. In other markets, Ameritech offers customers a choice -- a phone at an inexpensive price or a break in airtime charges.

Still, there are other offers floating around. BAM has some service packages that offer voice mail service at no extra charge. All of the portables sold at BAM come with a spare battery, at the least, and other accessories at most. In the case of its transportables, BAM sells them with a free external antenna. The company also targets customers' pocketbooks by offering different payment options. For instance, customers can lease or rent phones. Customers also have the option of setting up a payment plan to purchase the equipment.

There are some special promotions you may find you cannot compete against. Best Buy will meet any competitor's price. If another store is offering a free phone and Best Buy is selling that phone for \$100, then the customer can receive that phone for free, according to Fleagle. That is the easy part, she said. But she has found resistance when it comes to the newest marketing tactic. Some of her stores' competitors are giving customers money as part of a special promotion.

"We don't give money away," she said. "We don't go that far. It is difficult to compete against something like that. We don't have a defense against free cash."

Left without a rebuttal, Feagle turns to the carrier and asks it to give her something with which to compete.

"You do have to rely on the carriers. There is no other business I am involved in that I have such a lack of control over," she said. Opinions differ among carriers about whether or not this industry needs to continue to give phones away. Jeff Tennery, an RSA manager for PacTel in Rome, GA, thinks that special promotions target people who really don't want cellular. In turn, these people do not always turn out to be the best customers. Ameritech's Rooney disagrees with special promotions that require customers to pay continually for the phone over the life of the contract.

Still, there are other opinions. Some say it is OK to give the phone away for nothing. Others say you must attach a price tag to the phone. And still others say it must be sold for retail. Whatever your stand is, the one thing every salesperson must do is show that cellular is a valuable tool in a customer's life.

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Cellular wrong signals
Newsday, p39
July 22, 1993
ISSN: 0278-5587
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Document Type: Newspaper; Trade

ABSTRACT:

NYNEX Mobile Communications is being charged by the New York Better Business Bureau that it uses potentially misleading ads for a cellular phone package that includes a 'free' phone. Its ads say the 'Simplicity Plus' package requires a 2-year contract but does not specify the inclusion of high fees if the customer ends the contract prematurely. If the contract is canceled within 60 days, the customer returns the phone and pays a \$50 termination fee; after 60 days, the customer keeps the phone but pays \$250, the 'value of the equipment discount,' plus another \$120 termination fee. NYNEX officials insist the terms are spelled out before customers sign the contract.

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INDUSTRY NAMES: BUS (Business, General); BUSN (Any type of business)

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Communications Daily, v20, n202, pNA
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... service quality failures. Earlier pact fell apart in Sept. because of company's service quality problems over summer. New agreement retains previous \$20 million annual **penalty** for poor service but also would require Ameritech to issue automatic bill credit and provide **free cell phone** service if outage restoration took more than 3 days. Other features of previous **agreement** remain unchanged, including \$1 billion network investment requirement.

17/3,K/2 (Item 1 from file: 47)
DIALOG(R)File 47:Gale Group Magazine DB(TM)
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Faith goes cellular. (case study of a real estate agent's selection of a cellular phone and carrier) (includes advice on selecting a cellular phone) (Tutorial)

Crump, Stuart F., Jr.

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... unit.

Has Echols picked up any other tips that she would like to share with first-time buyers?

"Don't be fooled by advertisement for **free** or almost **free cellular phones**," she says. "Be sure you understand what else is required on your part." Frequently, you need to sign a **service agreement** for a certain period of time, perhaps a year or so, and you could get hit with a large **penalty** if you disconnect early. "Also look for hidden charges. Sometimes the free phone requires you to pay a programming or processing fee, special charges, activation...
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